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AUTHOR Terdy, Dennis
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ABSTRACT

There is a widespread lack of understanding of what bilingual and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) instruction consist of, and the day-to-day classroom operations are not easy to explain. Both bilingual and ESL instruction have seen rapid expansion in recent years, and the instructional and curricular approaches have been refined. It has been found that rather than emphasizing only discrete language skills, ESL teachers need to provide learning strategies that will apply to the acquisition of language skills beyond the specialized bilingual or ESL program. Sources are suggested for learning strategies in oral language, reading, and writing, as well as for articulation of the specialized program with mainstream instruction. Bilingual and ESL instructors have three basic responsibilities at all levels, to: (1) know fully the methodologies and curricula of the respective fields; (2) know and teach strategies in the essential skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and (3) know what skills students need upon exit from the instructional program. (MSE)

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"So What Do You Do In There Anyway?"

Dennis Terdy

How frequently are each of us who teach students of limited English proficiency asked the question, "So what do you do in there anyway?" Commonly asked questions of bilingual instructors include: "Do you ever teach English?" or "How long is this going to take?" To further prove the lack of clarity about our fields, those teaching ESL at any level, elementary through adult, are asked the same types of insightful questions as: "Are you still doing what you were doing?", or "So...how many languages do you speak?" These comments clearly point to the fact that few outside our field (ESL and bilingual) can grasp the meaning of what it is we actually do on a day to day basis.

This paper will address three essential areas to better clarify what it is we do presently, and what must be done to clarify our positions in the educational systems in which we serve.

1. Where are we presently and where have we been?
2. What instructional strategies will better prepare our LEP students?
3. Into what areas do our students go after they leave our specialized programs?

Where have we been and where are we presently?

There seems to have been very parallel developments in the fields of both bilingual and ESL education. Each emerged in the late 1960's and early 1970's and expanded rapidly.

In the early years, bilingual education philosophy and programs focussed on areas of ethnic awareness, first language instruction (maintenance programs) and the development and fostering of a child's self esteem. ESL, on the other hand, focussed mainly on audio-lingual methodologies (the mim-mem method), mechanical drilling, and dialogue memorization.

On into the mid to late 1970's, bilingual education, with more experienced instructors, program administrators and programs, began to concentrate on vital aspects of first language (L1) instruction. These included components of identification, sequencing, and appropriate selection of L1 skills. Basically, bilingual instructors began to determine just what to teach and when to teach it.

Simialarly, ESL instruction in the mid to late 1970's began to turn away from audiolingualism and focus more on meaningful communication. The term "communicative competence" came to the forefront while practitioners sought to define ways of structuring the environment to achieve meaningful, communicative situations for language practice. Specialized methodologies and approaches as Counseling Learning/Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response (TPR), and notional-functionalism began to replace audiolingualism.

Presently, bilingual education programs are in the process of

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defining how much L1 instruction is necessary to adequately prepare a student for all English (L2) instruction. Programs are much more aware of L1 language needs, how much time is needed in the L1 program, and how to better integrate skills needed outside the program. Furthermore, many ESL instructors have become familiar with the various specialized methodologies and approaches, and there is a concerted effort to use them selectively when needed and not to join a "swinging pendulum" approach to achieve instructional success. Within each of these fields there is also a concern to focus on the needs of ESL students beyond their present English instructional situations.

What instructional strategies will better prepare our students?

Over the last 15-20 years, our instructional and curricular approaches have matured and been refined. With this maturation, many in the field realize that discrete "skills" are not what students need alone. They also need strategies , strategies which can be applied generally to the acquisition of listening, speaking, reading and writing well beyond the specialized ESL or bilingual program. Joan Rubin (1975) in an article entitled "What the Good Second Language Learner Can Teach Us" cited several characteristics which can provide ESL instructors insight into oral strategies that they might exploit in second language teaching. Among the characteristics of good L2 learners mentioned are:

1. They are willing and accurate guessers;
2. They practice;
3. They pay attention to form;
4. They monitor their own speech;
5. They attend to meaning;
6. They are not inhibited; and
7. They have an infinite drive to communicate.

Among these, three have significant importance for ESL instructors in providing oral strategies. Strategies which attempt to make L2 learners willing and accurate guessers often are not included in the oral language development component. Activities which encourage guessing for the sake of communication are extremely helpful, since over emphasis on correctness in the early stages of L2 acquisition may not only be discouraging to the L2 learner, but also counter productive.

Another characteristic to emphasize here is the good L2 learner attends to meaning . This notion implies a strategy of looking for the "big picture," that is, deciding what the main point of communication is. Much too often L2 learners concentrate on details of communication, often individual word meanings, without looking for seeing this big picture. The obvious result is a very inefficient listening skill. Students clearly need practice activities which develop this "big picture" approach to listening.

The final characteristic having a significant effect on L2 oral strategies is that the good second language learner has an infinite drive to communicate . Most recently, ESL text books have begun to focus on this aspect of L2 learning. Among those are Look Who's Talking (Bassano, 1981), Idea Bank (Sadow, 1982) and Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class (Moscowitz, 1978). Each of these

texts sets up loosely structured problem-solving situations with communication as the main goal. Furthermore, minimal or no attention is given to grammatical accuracy. These activities provide extensive communication strategy practicing opportunities for the L2 learner.

Similarly, READING instruction for L2 learners often does not provide sufficient strategies for the massive quantity of reading LEP students are confronted with. Much time is spent on vocabulary development, and basic transfer from oral L2 speech to L2 reading. Little time, however, is spent on developing broader reading strategies (Terdy, 1981).

Harvey Taylor (1983) notes that in order to define what reading actually is, a definition of what it is not is in order. In summary he states:

1. Reading is not passive--it is not the absorbing of information through the eyes by looking sequentially at each word on a page of text.
2. Reading is not an addition process--it is not the adding up of the individual sounds of each letter to pronounce words; not the adding up of those words to pronounce phrases;
3. Reading is not speaking aloud what is on the printed page.
4. Reading is not finding out the complete meaning of every word, idiom, and phrase in a text.
5. Reading is not the analysis of the grammar structures in a sentence or paragraph.

Unfortunately, ESL reading instruction, oftentimes, focusses on two areas, grammar and vocabulary development and perhaps on Taylors' definition of what "reading is not ."

Frank Smith's (1983) comments regarding language learning aptly apply to reading as well. He states, "Language learning (reading in this context) is belittled and distorted by the common assumption that it essentially involves the development of vocabulary and grammar." He clearly implies it embodies much more. In fact, perhaps much more than we can realistically provide alone in the total context of L2 reading skills development program.

In relation to vocabulary, a 1941 study (Smith, 1941) noted that an English speaking 8- year- old- learns about 29 new words each day. A 1977 study (Miller, 1977) showed that 4- year- olds in a New York experimental school learned approximately 20 words each day, or what can be extrapolated to include 1 word per hour since birth! How can ESL instructors keep up with these expectations? It is impossible. The purpose here is not to recommend the elimination of vocabulary instruction, but rather to place it into proper perspective. Students need what might be referred to as "strategies beyond the bilingual dictionary" (D. Terdy, 1982). That is, they need approaches to reading beyond grammar and vocabulary development.

In Taylor (1983), the current views of leaders in the area of psycholinguistics and reading are summarized. These points may more clearly provide insights into the STRATEGIES bilingual and ESL instructors should be providing.

What Good Readers Do When They Read include:

1. They read silently . They do not read the words aloud.
2. They read for some purpose - maybe for news (a newspaper), or some specific fact (a telephone directory for a number of address), or for guidance (a map or instructions on how to operate a new tape recorder), or for pleasure (cartoons, comics, jokes, fiction), or for information on a specific topic (tourist information, school homework assignments, magazine articles, traffic signs).
3. They look at any pictures first.
4. They read any larger, darker words before they read other words.
5. They quickly notice any chapter or section titles .
6. They read selectively , not totally.
7. They skip uninteresting parts of a text. (Some people even skip to the last few pages of a mystery novel to find out the ending of the story before they read the book.)
8. They read many more pages of the language per day than they write .
9. They read much more difficult language than they can write themselves.
10. They almost never use a dictionary . Instead they guess at new words or read further to find contextual clues for the meaning of any unfamiliar words.

Many of these characteristics of "good readers" are embodied in study skill/text book reading strategies embodied in Robinson's SQRRR (1947) and Aukerman's Survey Technique (1972). Each of these two presents approaches to textbook reading with an important preview stage. This stage is one in which the reader briefly looks over the reading and hypothesizes about possible content. Each approach asks the student to relate his/her own experience base to the reading task as well. Reader's keys, including bold print, italics, subtitles, and pictures are also used in these approaches to facilitate reading comprehension. The main points represented by "good reader" characteristics and these survey strategies are that, as well as these two reading approaches, they include much more for the LEP student that can be easily taken beyond the specialized ESL or bilingual program.

The area of WRITING is probably the most regularly neglected skill. Ironically, as content areas begin to emerge (5th grade and higher), the writing demands placed on all students also increase dramatically. Three very common reasons for avoiding writing instruction may include the following:

1. Errors: Teachers often ask, "What do I do with all those errors. Do I correct them, only mark them, use colored pens to indicate them? (Colors don't make a difference; an error is an error.)

2. Writing Difficulty for the Instructor . Oftentimes, writing is avoided because the instructor also has the most difficulty with this skill. In this case, having maximum control over the curriculum, the instructor deminishes the role of writing in the curriculum first!

3. An Effective, Interesting Approach . Difficulty determining how to approach writing also causes teachers to avoid the task. "Where do I start?" How many questions about My Summer Vacation...can be asked?

In Writing: Teachers and Children at Work , Donald Graves (1983) aptly cites the role of the "writing process" to minimize these 3

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excuses for avoiding writing instruction. Developed from an NIE research grant for L1 English speakers, Grave's comments can most appropriately apply to second language writing instruction as well. He cites four areas as crucial in the writing process program:

1. Students must talk about ideas first, Vivian Amel (1983) notes that writing is actually the "result of an idea dveloping"
2. Consider the audience. Students write to one audience generally, the teacher. This clearly creates communicative limitations.
3. Have a purpose for writing. Graves uses "voice" to address this. For what reason has the <u>writer</u> decided on this topic. Graves notes that the stronger the commitment or voice, the stronger the written product.
4. <u>Good Writers</u> go for ideas first and mechanics (spelling, grammar, etc.) last. This finding is also substantiated by Mina Schaunessy (1977) and Vivian Zamel (1982, 1983).

With strategies of good writers implied in the development of a writing process approach, the question again arises: Are we, in the fields of ESL and bilingual instruction, aware of these, or rather do we provide these strategies in our approaches for the development of this much needed writing skill?

Where do students, go after they leave the LEP instructional program?

In the maturation process of the field of LEP instruction, security within our respective fields, ESL and bilingual, naturally (hopefully) occurs. This security, knowing what is taught and how, allows us the freedom to look beyond our classrooms... to where our students go after they leave our programs. Anna Uhl Chamot in "How to Plan a Transfer Curriculum from Bilingual to Mainstream Instruction" (1983) mentions 6 essential points in looking beyond the specialized LEP program.

1. Become familiar with the complete elementary school L2 (English-only) curriculum.
2. Correlate L1 curriculum skills and concepts to L2 curriculum for equivalent grade levels.
3. Initiate transfer instruction in linquistically less demanding subjects such as art, math, music, and physical education.
4. In content area lessons, emphasize comprehension and communication rather than linguistic correctness.
5. Use L1 to: provide advance organizers to aid learning; preview and review lessons.
6. Develop study skills through listening activities, silent reading comprehension activities, and test-taking strategies.

These comments were made in relation to a bilingual instructional program model. However, they can be applied most appropriately to an ESL program model as well.

In an analysis of 3 major English basal reading programs (for Native speakers K-3) and 3 major elementary school ESL series (K-3), (Dew and Terdy, 1981) some surprising results surfaced. The basal reading series universally and systematically began developing not only basic reading skills (as decoding), but also included study skills,

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handwriting, and introduction to literary types (poetry, songs). In addition, tasks requiring inferring as well as critical analysis were also surprisingly introduced.

When the 3 major ESL text series were analyzed, two of these texts included virtually none of the skills of the English basal program, while only one ESL series included merely 30-40% of these skills. If the rationale for the exclusion of these skills by the ESL texts was because LEP students needed higher level of English language proficiency, it was unfortunate. It was unfortunate because by grade 3 (after 3 years), most students are exiting from their ESL programs. When would the LEP students get these skills? They would get them suddenly and intensively much too late... upon exit!

At the secondary as well as adult levels, the Chamot "transfer" points are equally applicable. Most importantly, LEP instructors need to know the linguistic needs of the LEP students in the transfer classes. In 1982, Sue Morrisroe of Maine West High School, (Morrisroe, 1982) surveyed the regular English department staff at her school. What she found in this informal survey was not surprising. The regular teachers expected LEP students to have well developed themes, with correct use of writing mechanics as well as correct use of English grammar. What was significant about this survey was that the expectations of receiving teachers were asked! Although the results were not profound, the indications were that the ESL teacher should have covered some material on theme development and mechanics etc. within the context of the ESL program. Furthermore, the correct grammar comment indicates there may be a need to inservice the transfer class teacher on common English L2 acquisition errors which many never be fully eliminated from the LEP students writing.

As Jean Handscomb noted in her speech, "Who's in Charge Here?" (1984), bilingual and ESL instructors at all levels need to take the local leadership role. In this case they must take the leadership role in transitioning from ESL or bilingual programs to "regular" programs. They must identify the necessary skills and prepare students before they leave.

ESL programs in adult (basic) education are presented with multiple variables. Not only are the program locations far removed from a regular campus or community college setting, the students' English needs and interests beyond the ESL program are infinite.

Nevertheless, for academic transitioning, the Chamot principles still apply to this adult context as well. In the final adult ESL program levels, adult (basic) ESL students need to be prepared for a gradual transition. The ESL instructor's program needs to include many aspects of study skills, composition writing, textbook reading and note taking in order to provide adequate transition program beyond the adult ESL class to more specialized training or academically oriented programs.

Conclusion

"So What Do You Do In There Anyway?" The question is still not easy to answer. Nevertheless, bilingual and ESL instructors at all levels are charged with 3 tasks:

1. Know the methodologies of the respective fields as well as the curriculum fully.

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2. Know and teach strategies in the essential skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
3. Know what skills students need upon exit from the LEP instructional program.

Only with the knowledge of these three areas can we adequately and comfortably answer the question about what it is we actually do in our programs and classrooms.

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